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INTER-AGENCY COMMITTEE ON
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

REPORT OF THE ACC SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER RESOURCES ON ITS SEVENTEENTH SESSION

(UNESCO headquarters, Paris, 9-11 October 1996)

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I. MATTERS BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE INTER-AGENCY COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A. Measures to strengthen coordination

(Agenda item 5)

1. United Nations system

(Agenda item 5 (a))

1. In discussing possibilities for distributing information about activities of its member organizations, the members of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources expressed the view that the lack of detailed information on field-level activities of the various member organizations constituted a serious impediment to systematically making such information readily available to each other. The matter was discussed further in the context of establishing a database under agenda item 10 (a) (see paras. 24-26 below).

2. Global Water Partnership

(Agenda item 5 (b))

2. The representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) informed the Subcommittee of the official launching of the Global Water Partnership at Stockholm on 9 August 1996. The Global Water Partnership is an international mechanism that aims to translate the consensus on water management into responsive coherent services for developing countries, emphasizing local implementation. The Partnership will thus support integrated water resources management programmes by collaborating with Governments and existing networks, as well as developing new arrangements, encouraging Governments, aid agencies and other stakeholders to adopt consistent and mutually complementary policies and programmes, and sharing information and experience. The Partnership will also develop solutions to common problems within integrated water resources management, suggest policies and practices based on those solutions, and help match needs to available resources.

3. The Global Water Partnership is co-sponsored by UNDP, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and the World Bank, and is governed by a Consultative Group of representatives from external support agencies, developing countries, the private sector and academic institutions. It receives technical advice from a Technical Advisory Committee, and its secretariat, headed by an Executive Secretary, is located at Stockholm.

4. The members of the Subcommittee stressed the importance of the Global Water Partnership as a means of implementing, at the field level, the recommendations of the Commission at its fifth session and of the General Assembly at its special session, stemming from the comprehensive assessment of the freshwater resources of the world.

5. It was agreed that the Chief of the Water Resources Development and Management Service of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) or the Chairman of the Subcommittee, ex officio, would represent the Subcommittee at the meetings of the Interim Committee of the Global Water Partnership.

3. Organizations outside the United Nations system

(Agenda item 5 (c))

6. The members of the Subcommittee welcomed Mr. Guy Lemoigne, Executive Director of the recently established World Water Council, who briefed the Subcommittee on the objectives and membership of the Council, as well as on its planned activities. He stated that membership was open to national and international institutions, government agencies, and private and public organizations and firms, as well as non-governmental organizations and academic and scientific organizations. He expressed the hope that organizations of the United Nations system would join the Council, and looked forward to a close collaboration between the members of the Subcommittee and Council. He noted that the Council would be engaged in the preparation of a long-term policy on water, life and the environment. In addition, the Council was in the process of organizing The Morocco Forum: Water Resources Management in the Next Century, to be convened by the Government of Morocco at Marrakesh on 22 March 1997.

7. The members of the Subcommittee expressed great interest in cooperating with the Council in the preparation of the Conference as a part of the observance of World Water Day, and agreed to explore the matter further. It was noted that the representatives of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNDP, the World Bank and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) are currently members of the Interim Board of Governors of the Council, and that they would provide the link for further consultations.

8. The members of the Subcommittee stressed the increasing importance of holding periodic consultations with the World Water Council, The Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council and major international non-governmental organizations for the monitoring and implementation of chapter 18 of Agenda 21. They recommended that future sessions of the Subcommittee be combined with an informal meeting of the Subcommittee with the representatives of the two councils.

B. Initiatives for joint action: public information, with particular reference to World Water Day

(Agenda item 6 (c))

9. The representative of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) recalled that the Subcommittee, at its sixteenth session, agreed on "Water for thirsty cities" as the theme for the observance of World Water Day in 1996 in order to link it with the convening of the United Nations Conference on

Human Settlements (Habitat II). Habitat was designated as the lead agency for the organization of events for the Day. The representative briefed the members of the Subcommittee on the activities that had been organized for the observance of the day in collaboration with the Department for Policy Coordination and the Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat, UNEP, UNDP, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the World Bank, the regional commissions, the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council and numerous non-governmental organizations.

10. An information kit on issues and problems of urban water resources management was mailed to all countries through the UNDP resident representative, for distribution to all water-related agencies and institutions and all United Nations agencies and regional offices and commissions. It was also disseminated on the Internet via the Habitat home page, as well as the UNDP Higgins Network. National and local authorities and non-governmental organizations were encouraged to use the media in order to draw attention to water supply, sanitation, drainage and waste management problems; demonstrate tangible improvements in the provision of water and sanitation for the poor; and identify, publicize and reward local initiatives for improving the lot of the poor. Universities and schools were urged to organize design, essay and painting competitions, and to introduce water issues into school curricula. Children's events were organized in Nairobi, Jakarta, Quito, Stockholm and Beijing.

11. The Government of China hosted an international conference on managing water resources for large cities and towns, with about 150 participants from some 50 countries and United Nations agencies. The conference adopted the Beijing Declaration as an input to the Habitat II Conference. The observance of World Water Day in Beijing included a children's event, a press conference and community-based observances around Beijing, followed by official observances and the award of the World Day for Water Scrolls of Honour, in recognition of major contributions to water development, which were held in the Great Hall of the People.

12. The members of the Subcommittee recalled that the theme for the observance of World Water Day in 1997 was to be linked to the comprehensive assessment of the freshwater resources of the world. The representatives of UNESCO and WMO, as lead agencies for World Water Day for 1997, informed the Subcommittee of activities being planned in connection with the observance of the Day. It was agreed that the Chairman of the Subcommittee, as a member of the Interim Board of Governors of the World Water Council, would explore the possibilities of cooperating with organizations of the Morocco Forum: Water Resources Management in the Next Century, as part of the observance of World Water Day.

13. Given the importance of groundwater worldwide, particularly in arid and semi-arid regions, as well as the limited knowledge on hydrogeological systems, the members of the Subcommittee recommended that the theme of World Water Day in 1998 be "Groundwater: invisible resource", with an emphasis on water quality as well as quantity.

C. Coordination and monitoring of chapter 18 of Agenda 21, and system-wide cooperative efforts for the implementation of recommendations contained therein: protection of water resources, water quality and aquatic ecosystems

(Agenda item 7 (c))

14. The representative of UNEP highlighted the major problems involved in analysing water quality issues on a global or regional scale. Much of the available global and regional water quality information is a product of the UNEP Global Environment Monitoring System/Water Quality Monitoring Programme (GEMS/Water). GEMS/Water is implemented by the World Health Organization (WHO) for UNEP. Water-quality data under GEMS/Water are typically obtained from national-level monitoring stations, whose participation is supported by the provision of capacity-building services to the countries involved.

15. The representative noted that knowledge of water quality on a global scale is much less comprehensive than knowledge of water quantity, a conclusion reached in the process of preparing the comprehensive assessment on freshwater resources of the world. High costs and insufficient knowledge of environmental pathways and impacts were among the reasons for that situation.

16. The members of the Subcommittee expressed concern at the evident deterioration of water quality worldwide, which is rapidly reducing the potable water resource base and threatening human health and aquatic ecosystems. Unlike water quantity, the fundamental scientific understanding of the processes and related flux transfer of surface and subsurface contaminants is far from comprehensive. Limited access to existing databases on water quality has restricted the appropriate development of the models that are urgently required for the development and application of land and water management guidelines within the framework of water pollution and environmental health. Water quality covers a range of pollutants that concern both human and environmental health. Moreover, the costs and infrastructure, such as laboratories, that are required for water quality monitoring to be achieved comprehensively are beyond the means of any one United Nations agency to support.

17. The members of the Subcommittee noted that the water quality situation had been similar during the 1960s. At that time, the recognition that there was insufficient understanding of hydrological processes for application in water resources management prompted the International Hydrological Decade, 1965-1974. The global programme had stimulated the establishment of a network of representative basins that rapidly improved the understanding of hydrology and water resources management, based on United Nations inter-agency cooperation, underpinned by strong support at the national level in many countries.

18. The Subcommittee therefore supported a proposal for the development of a comprehensive water quality programme, as a cooperative effort of UNESCO, UNEP, the United Nations University (UNU), the Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat and WHO, based on a carefully selected global network of representative drainage basins to encompass the broad spectrum of environments so that future extrapolation to unmonitored basins can be achieved. Each monitored basin will support a carefully planned

integrated research and training programme to develop appropriate water quality models to address the needs of water supply, water and health, and the broader objective of improving the condition of the environment. Details of the proposal were to be elaborated by the above-mentioned organizations and circulated for comments to the members of the Subcommittee by the end of 1996. It was further recommended that GEMS/Water be strengthened as a means of rectifying the current lack of information on water quality within the framework of water resources assessment.

D. Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities

(Agenda item 9)

19. The representative of UNEP described the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities. The Programme of Action was developed to address major threats to the health and productivity of the marine environment resulting from human activities on land; it was adopted at an intergovernmental conference in Washington, D.C. (23 October-3 November 1995).

20. UNEP had been selected to carry out the secretariat functions of the Programme of Action. The main role of UNEP, together with its partner agencies, is to assist countries in the implementation of the Programme of Action, foster subregional, regional and global cooperation in its implementation, and provide a global institutional framework to coordinate that implementation. A draft implementation plan was developed by UNEP and subsequently modified following consultations with United Nations and intergovernmental bodies, as well as selected Governments and non-governmental organizations. The implementation plan includes proposals for institutional arrangements, a timetable and modalities for implementation of the Programme of Action, a description of the secretariat role and inputs of UNEP and other bodies, and financial implications. The draft plan was subsequently submitted to the Commission at its fourth session as the basis for a draft resolution on institutional arrangements for implementation of the Programme of Action, to be adopted by the General Assembly at its fifty-first session.

21. The Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Waters will regularly review the state of implementation of the Programme of Action. The members of the Subcommittee on Water Resources discussed the possibility of establishing linkages between the two subcommittees. Possible roles for the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources could include formal liaison/collaboration between the two subcommittees; participation in regional workshops, a clearing-house mechanism, and/or assessments of land-based activities; and the identification and implementation of remedial programmes to address land-based activities.

22. The members of the Subcommittee stressed the fact that the bulk of ocean and coastal area pollution stems from the pollution of inland freshwater. They stressed their concern about the current state of affairs concerning pollution monitoring and control worldwide, and the need for increased efforts by the United Nations system. In that regard, the proposal by UNESCO, UNEP, UNU, the

Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat and WHO for developing a comprehensive water quality programme based on selected global networks of representative drainage basins (see paras. 14-18 above), including coastal areas, could constitute an important contribution to the implementation of the Global Programme of Action.

23. The members of the Subcommittee decided that the Chairperson of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources would consult his counterpart on the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Waters prior to its next meeting regarding an appropriate role for the Subcommittee on Water Resources in support of implementation of the Programme of Action.

E. Other issues related to system-wide coordination

(Agenda item 10)

1. Facilitation of information flows concerning programmes and activities of the organizations of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations

(Agenda item 10 (a))

24. The members of the Subcommittee agreed on the need to establish a database in which members could include information on their activities. The importance of adopting a common terminology was stressed. The representative from FAO stated that most organizations have a home page but that there is a need for cross-references.

25. It was decided that the database should begin by describing United Nations field-level activities and later include information on global, regional and local activities. A task force with representatives of UNDP, the World Bank, the Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat, UNESCO, UNEP and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) was formed in order to make recommendations on the scope and content of the database and an implementation schedule.

26. It was decided that, as a first step, the database would be established for sub-Saharan countries that are part of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa, and would later be expanded to become a global database. The Subcommittee will further review the outcome of those efforts at its eighteenth session.

2. Other matters

(Agenda item 10 (e))

27. The representative of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat informed the Subcommittee that the Economic and Social Council had decided on "Freshwater, including clean and safe water supply and sanitation" as the sectoral theme for

the coordination segment of its substantive session of 1997. He would consult shortly with the members of the Subcommittee on the scope and outline of the report of the Secretary-General that would be prepared on that theme, and would inform them of the deadline for its preparation.

F. Date and place of the eighteenth session of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources

(Agenda item 11)

28. The members of the Subcommittee took note of the invitation of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to host the eighteenth session of the Subcommittee. They recommended that the eighteenth session be held at IAEA headquarters from 1 to 3 October 1997. The session would be preceded by the seventh meeting of the Inter-Agency Steering Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation, which would be held on 29 September 1997, and by a meeting of the Inter-Agency Working Group for the Water component of the United Nations System-Wide Special Initiative on Africa, which would be held on 30 September 1997. The members of the Subcommittee also recommended that a number of international non-governmental organizations be invited to participate at an informal meeting with the members of the Subcommittee on 30 September 1997.

II. CONCLUSIONS REACHED AND SUMMARY DISCUSSIONS ON OTHER MATTERS

A. Matters arising from the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development: review of the task managers report for the 1997 review of chapter 18 of Agenda 21

(Agenda item 3)

29. The members of the Subcommittee had before them document ACC/SWR/1996/3, containing the draft task managers report on chapter 18 of Agenda 21, prepared in connection with the fifth session of the C mmission on Sustainable Development, as well as document ACC/SWR/1996/4, the report of the meeting of task managers held in New York from 8 to 10 July 1996 to review the task managers draft.

30. The members of the Subcommittee agreed that the draft report needed to give further emphasis to such issues as gender, pollution, education and training, water and trade, and peri-urban areas. In accordance with the recommendations from the July meeting of task managers, it was agreed that the report should contain references to the Africa 2000 Initiative on Water Supply and Sanitation and to the outcome of Habitat II. Additional inputs to the report would be sent to the Secretary of the Subcommittee no later than 18 October 1996.

31. The members of the Subcommittee agreed that given the quality of the report, its recommendations should be reflected in the comprehensive assessment of freshwater resources to be submitted to the Commission on Sustainable

Development at its fifth session and to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, in 1997.

32. The members of the Subcommittee expressed the view that the material contained in the report could constitute a basis for an information document outlining issues on activities of the organizations of the United Nations system in the field of water resources.

B. Matters arising from the third session of the Committee on Natural Resources

(Agenda item 4)

33. The representative of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat briefed the members of the Subcommittee on the outcome of the third session of the Committee on Natural Resources, held in New York from 6 to 16 May 1996. A summary of the deliberations and recommendations of the Committee, as well as of ensuing decisions by the Economic and Social Council, was presented in document ACC/SWR/1996/5.

34. The representative noted that three documents on water-related issues are to be prepared for the fourth session of the Committee, namely:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on water resources, focusing on progress made towards achieving sustainable development, describing the coordination and integration of the activities of United Nations organizations and bodies, and success in meeting the goals set;

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to the comprehensive assessment of the freshwater resources of the world;

(c) Report of the Secretary-General on issues related to the spatial planning of land and water resources.

35. As to the first report, it was suggested that the report would be an expanded version of the task managers report to the Commission on Sustainable Development on chapter 18 of Agenda 21, based on its description of progress and issues and describing relevant activities of the organizations as they pertain to those issues. The organizations responsible for monitoring each of the seven programme areas in chapter 18 of Agenda 21, as agreed at the fourteenth session of the Subcommittee, would produce a draft by June 1997 in collaboration with the organizations concerned and submit it to the Secretary by the end of July 1997. The report would then be put together and sent to the members for comments, and a final draft would be presented to the Subcommittee at its eighteenth session, in late September 1997. As to the second report, an outline will be formulated following the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly. As to the report on issues related to management of land and water resources on an integrated basis, an outline of the report will be formulated by the Department, in consultation with FAO, and will be distributed for comments to the members of the Subcommittee.

36. The representative of the Department for Development Support and Management Services provided additional information on the deliberations of the Committee on Natural Resources on privatization and on the Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on Strategic Issues Concerning Transboundary Water Resources convened during the Committee meeting.

C. Initiatives for joint action

(Agenda item 6)

1. Comprehensive assessment of the freshwater resources of the world

(Agenda item 6 (a))

37. The members of the Subcommittee had before them document ACC/SWR/1996/6, containing a first draft of the comprehensive assessment of the freshwater resources of the world. The document was reviewed together with the comments provided.

38. The members of the Subcommittee expressed their general support for the approach and the basic conclusions, bearing in mind the data and time constraints under which the assessment must be prepared. Because of those constraints, they recommended that the report state at the outset that it is a preliminary assessment, in accordance with the decision of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its fourth session, in 1996. The executive summary should emphasize the value added by the assessment relative to previous studies.

39. The members of the Subcommittee expressed the view that the recommendations contained in the task managers report on chapter 18 of Agenda 21 be used extensively. They also recommended that the conclusions of the assessment be cast in a positive tone, stressing opportunities for action while recognizing the seriousness of the situation. Actions required from different users, from the local community level to governmental and intergovernmental levels, as well as stakeholder's rights and responsibilities need to be further highlighted. It was pointed out by the representative from the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) that the existing document does not make any mention of gender and freshwater resources of the world, and as such could not be submitted to the Commission on Sustainable Development in 1997. The same applied to linkage between renewable sources of energy and water resources management. The members of the Subcommittee agreed on the need to include gender issues in the document, particularly in its conclusions and recommendations.

40. The members of the Subcommittee recognized the importance of drawing attention to the economic damage caused by the mismanagement of water resources and the need to underscore economic aspects of natural resources in general. They stressed the need to emphasize problems arising from low economic development and lack of appropriate infrastructure.

41. It was agreed that a short glossary of definitions should be included. Stronger linkages between the assessment and ongoing processes within the United Nations system must be further developed in the text, and the aspects of the developing countries need to be further extended. The term "water crisis" needs to be more clearly defined as being local and/or regional in nature, with possible global implications.

42. The Subcommittee concluded that the linkages between the different chapters need to be further strengthened, particularly in the case of chapters three and four of the draft report.

43. The members of the Subcommittee also agreed on changes in the individual chapters. As to chapter one, it was argued that its definition of mismanagement is not historically correct: it is a matter of mismanagement during the twentieth century. Chapter one should also include a section on the problems related to the lack and quality of data, and a section on the eradication of the guinea worm. It was further suggested that the ecosystem approach needs to be further developed. Section 3 of chapter one should include a reference to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

44. It was the consensus of Subcommittee members that chapter two needs to be more consistent. The chapter should introduce the FAO water budget. The index maps need to be retitled and a map on groundwater quality, already prepared by the Department for Development Support and Management Services, should be included. The concept of water scarcity should be replaced by the concept of the excessive use of water. Figure 4, showing water withdrawal and consumption by sector, needs to be expanded to include water used for energy and hydropower, and should not treat water storage as a separate sector. The heading "Groundwater overutilization" should be changed to "Human withdrawals of groundwater", and the section "Water pollution issues" should contain a section entitled "Groundwater pollution", including radioactive waste disposal, emphasizing the problem with long-term pollution. The issue of phosphate as a nutrient needs to be developed in the section on eutrophication, and the discussion on point and non-point sources needs to be extended. The section on the nutrient loads present in human sewage should be moved to the section on water supply and sanitation, and the term "waste water" should replace the term "sewage".

45. The members of the Subcommittee recommended that the section on soil erosion and salinization be expanded to include a section on the implications of natural climate variability in the section on climate change. Issues related to ozone depletion (ecosystems) should be mentioned. The last two paragraphs in that section on the implementation of remedial measures related to the misuse of freshwater and land resources should be removed. The chapter should conclude with a section on the gaps and limitations of the available data.

46. As to chapter three, the Subcommittee agreed on an overall need to simplify its language and eliminate excessively complicated diagrams. Chapters three and four both need to be more consistent. It was felt that the indicators used in chapter four to describe coping capabilities and management options did not provide a suitable description of the African situation, and needed to be revised in order to reflect the situation in that region.

47. It was decided that further comments would be submitted to the Secretary of the Subcommittee by 18 October 1996.

2. Water resources management in African countries

(Agenda item 6 (b))

(a) Water-related components of the Secretary-General's Special Initiative for Africa (Agenda item 6 (b) (i))

48. The representative of UNEP briefed the members of the Subcommittee on the outcome of the meeting of the inter-agency working group for the water components of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa, which was held on 11 October 1996 in conjunction with the meeting of the Subcommittee.

49. The representative recalled that a Steering Committee had been established to implement the Special Initiative, co-chaired by the UNDP Administrator and the Executive Secretary of ECA. Initial membership comprised UNEP, FAO, UNESCO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank, the ILO, WHO, the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The work of the Special Initiative was carried out by five inter-agency working groups, on (a) water (Chair - UNEP); (b) food security (Chair - FAO); (c) governance (Chair - UNDP); (d) social and human development (Chair - UNESCO); and (e) resource mobilization (Chair - World Bank). The Special Initiative, launched globally on 15 March 1996, was developed as a 10-year programme, comprising priority activities identified by each working group, at a total cost of US$ 25 billion.

50. The working group on water had identified four priority objectives, including (a) assuring sustainable and equitable freshwater, (b) household water security, (c) freshwater assessments, and (d) water for food security. The working group structure was modified during a meeting held at the World Bank in April 1996 to focus on practical implementation of water priorities. Cooperating bodies are UNEP, UNDP, FAO, UNICEF, the World Bank, ECA, WHO, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), WMO, the Southern African Development Community and UNESCO. UNEP and the World Bank will serve as continuing co-chairs of the Working Group. UNEP also will compile and analyse information on ongoing and planned activities of all United Nations bodies working on African water issues, as a means of enhancing collaboration and cooperation and preventing overlapping activities.

51. At the meeting of 11 October 1996, members of the working group reviewed ongoing and planned activities in support of the implementation of the water-related objectives of the Special Initiative and the role of lead agencies concerning specific objectives. The meeting also discussed criteria for identifying areas or countries in which concerted action by the organizations of the system should focus, as well as indicators of success in the implementation of activities. The representative of the Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat provided additional

information on a report prepared by the Department on the need to ensure equitable access and sustainable use of water, which had been sent to UNEP on 17 April 1996.

52. The members of the Subcommittee reiterated the importance attached by their organizations to the Special Initiative and their support for the successful implementation of its objectives.

(b) Compilation and analysis of activities of United Nations organizations (Agenda item 6 (c) (ii))

53. Members of the Subcommittee considered a report on activities of the organizations of the United Nations system in water resources in the African region (ACC/SWR/1996/7), which had been prepared by FAO.

54. The document shows that a substantial amount of work has already been carried out in Africa by the organizations of the system, and that a considerable amount of collaboration exists between them. It was noted that the document did not provide budgetary information on those activities, and it was agreed that such information would be very useful in the future.

55. The members of the Subcommittee expressed their appreciation for the document, and agreed on the need for the collection and dissemination of such information as an integral part of the proposed database on the activities of the organizations of the United Nations system in the field of water resources (see paras. 24-26 above).

(c) Africa 2000 Initiative for Water Supply and Sanitation (Agenda item 6 (b) (iii))

56. The representative of WHO provided a summary of the work carried out within the Africa 2000 Initiative, which was launched by the ministers of health of 46 African countries at the meeting of the WHO Regional Committee for Africa in September 1994.

57. The first regional consultation on the Africa 2000 Initiative for Water Supply and Sanitation was held at Brazzaville, the Congo, from 25 to 27 June 1996, bringing together some 140 participants, including senior government officials, from almost all the countries of Africa, as well as representatives of United Nations organizations, development agencies and non-governmental organizations.

58. The Brazzaville Declaration adopted at the consultation stressed the need for priorities to be based on the expressed desires of the people; for development to be founded on local skills and resources so as to produce appropriate solutions; for partnerships to be formed among communities, local governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and development agencies; and for external support to be based on national plans and programmes.

59. The consultation also agreed on a series of conclusions and recommendations for follow-up action on issues of finance, political commitment, coordination, communications, capacity-building, appropriate technology and the management of

water resources. The participants called for the appointment of Africa 2000 focal points in all countries, and the linking of Africa 2000 with other development initiatives on the continent, especially the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa. An Africa 2000 secretariat will be established in the WHO Regional Office for Africa.

60. The members of the Subcommittee recommended that the working group on water of the Special Initiative for Africa include the Africa 2000 Initiative as part of its work.

(d) Report on the Inter-Agency Group for Water in Africa
(Agenda item 6 (b) (iv))

61. The representative of ECA briefed the members of the Subcommittee on the activities of the Inter-Agency Group for Water in Africa. He pointed out that the Group has held four meetings to date, most recently in 1995 at IAEA headquarters at Vienna. At the Vienna meeting, emphasis was placed on inter-agency cooperation in the area of transboundary water issues in Africa. It was decided that a comprehensive background paper on transboundary water issues in Africa would be prepared by ECA.

62. The fifth meeting of the Inter-Agency Group will be convened at Alexandria, Egypt, from 3 to 5 December 1996, at which ECA will present a study on the problems and prospects for intercountry cooperation for integrated water resources development in the Nile basin area. The study has been circulated to all the agencies for their comments and inputs.

D. Coordination and monitoring of chapter 18 of Agenda 21, and system-wide cooperative efforts for the implementation of recommendations contained therein

(Agenda item 7)

1. Integrated water resources development and management

(Agenda item 7 (a))

63. The representative of UNDP introduced a paper entitled "Human resources development in the water sector" (ACC/SWR/1996/9), and informed the members of the Subcommittee about a forthcoming UNDP international symposium on capacity-building, which will be held at Delft, the Netherlands, from 4 to 6 December 1996, in collaboration with the International Institute for Hydraulics and Environmental Engineering. The symposium will look into success stories in capacity-building, and will consider links between freshwater and coastal areas, and the role and capacity of local banks and financial institutions as additional dimensions of the concept of capacity-building. The representative of the Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat indicated that the fragmentation of institutions dealing with water resources management at the country level continued to represent a most serious constraint in achieving an integrated approach to water management.

64. The members of the Subcommittee recalled that at the sixteenth session of the Subcommittee they had expressed their appreciation for the joint FAO/UNDP/World Bank publication Water Policies and Strategy Formulation: a General Framework. In accordance with the recommendation of the Subcommittee, the publication has since been given wide distribution at the country level. As to the preparation of a system-wide source book or guidelines on water resources policy, the initial work carried out in accordance with the decision of the Subcommittee at its sixteenth session indicated that various organizations are still using concepts and definitions that require further harmonization. The Subcommittee agreed that a source book summarizing policies of the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system and the regional banks would be prepared under the leadership of UNDP. It was noted that the consensus paper on water supply and sanitation developed through the Steering Committee constituted a step towards achieving that objective.

2. Water resources assessment

(Agenda item 7 (b))

65. The representative of WMO stated that work on a WMO/UNESCO handbook on national evaluation of water resources assessment activities has been completed and the revised version will soon be available. He also provided information on the updating of the Hydrological Information Report Service, a computerized database that contains information from national, regional and international hydrological agencies, networks and data banks of WMO members. The data available, covering 160 countries, could also be of relevance for the database proposed by the Subcommittee to be established for the sub-Saharan countries that are included in the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa.

66. WMO, in cooperation with the Inter-American Development Bank, organized a conference on water resources assessment and management for Latin America and the Caribbean at San José, Costa Rica, in May 1996, which was attended by 150 senior representatives and experts on water resources from 33 Latin American and Caribbean countries and 18 international and national organizations. The Action Plan adopted by the conference covers the areas of integrated water resources management; institutional and legal frameworks; comprehensive water resources assessment; basic information for the integrated management of water resources; human resources and training; education and community participation; natural disasters; and transboundary water resources. A similar conference is planned for 1997 or 1998 in the Asia and Pacific region, and will be organized jointly with the Asian Development Bank.

67. The Subcommittee was also informed about recent developments regarding the World Hydrological Cycle Observing System, developed by WMO with support of the World Bank and other bodies. In addition to the project already implemented in the Mediterranean rim countries, detailed project proposals had been developed for a Southern Africa component, expected to be implemented with European Union funding. Plans were being prepared for a West and Central Africa component, for the Intergovernmental Authority on Development countries and for the Caribbean basin. The representative of WMO also informed the Subcommittee about the

forthcoming tenth session of the WMO Commission for Hydrology, to be held at Koblenz, Germany, from 2 to 12 December 1996.

68. The representative of IAEA noted a joint initiative to establish an isotope hydrological database. He invited other organizations to take part in the build-up of the database.

3. Water supply and sanitation: report of the Inter-Agency Steering Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation

(Agenda item 7 (d))

69. The members of the Subcommittee reviewed a report of the sixth meeting of the Inter-Agency Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation, which had been convened prior to the ACC Subcommittee meeting, from 7 to 8 October 1996, at UNESCO headquarters in Paris.

70. Among the items of the agenda of direct concern to the Subcommittee was a consensus prepared as the basis for joint approaches to water supply and sanitation development. The Steering Committee recommended that the document be completed by the end of 1996, for submission to the Secretary of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources for finalization as a background document that could be of use in connection with the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development and a number of other intergovernmental bodies.

71. The Steering Committee further identified several key issues that needed further attention, including improving information in water supply and sanitation coverage by strengthening the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme, and improving information on water quality through GEMS/Water, as well as the alarming situation concerning the lack of sewage treatment and the need to strengthen partnerships among the organizations of the United Nations system, external support agencies and the private sector.

4. Water for sustainable urban development

(Agenda item 7 (e))

72. The representative of Habitat highlighted the significance of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), held in Istanbul from 3 to 14 June 1996, in promoting urban water resources management and development. The Habitat II preparatory process had included an international conference on the theme "Water for thirsty cities", organized by Habitat in cooperation with UNEP and the Government of the Netherlands. The conference, held at Beijing from 18 to 21 March 1996, was attended by more than 150 participants from 50 countries, including the representatives of bilateral agencies, United Nation agencies, and leading non-governmental organizations. The Beijing Declaration adopted by the conference reiterated the principles contained in the Dublin Statement, such as the economic value of water, and focused on the urgency of greater efforts to promote management in order to improve the efficiency of water use, as well as the importance of innovative financing mechanisms and

broad-based partnerships bringing together the public and private sectors and local communities.

73. Another important event was a round table on the theme "Water for thirsty cities", organized by UNDP and the Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat in association with Habitat, during Habitat II at Istanbul. The round table recommended the adoption of the above-mentioned Beijing Declaration as a basis for country-level and international action, and the Declaration was subsequently included as an official document of Habitat II.

74. Following up Habitat II, Habitat, together with UNDP, organized a round table on the theme "Partnership in the water sector", held in Washington, D.C., on 14 September 1996, bringing together leaders of national and local governments, major private developers and representatives of United Nations agencies to discuss public, private and community partnerships for the delivery of water-related urban services.

75. The representatives of Habitat and UNDP announced their plans to organize a consultation on the theme "Partnerships in the water sector in Africa", to be held in March or April 1997. The Habitat representative also introduced a document entitled "Multi-agency programme for integrated water resources management in peri-urban areas" (ACC/SWR/1996/8), and informed members that the document included the comments of member agencies; interested agencies were invited to attend the consultation.

5. Water for sustainable food production and rural development

(Agenda item 7 (f))

76. The representative of FAO informed the Subcommittee of progress in programmes in the field of water for sustainable food production and rural development. He stated that the World Food Summit, which was to be held from 13 to 17 November 1996 in Rome, would provide a forum at the highest political level for addressing the need for global commitment and action to eradicate hunger and malnutrition and achieve lasting food security for all. Water management would be one of the important issues to be discussed at the Summit. In addition, FAO had launched a special programme in 21 low-income food-deficit countries, that gave high priority to irrigation development and soil moisture conservation in areas in which water was a limiting factor and large productivity gains and/or stabilization of yields could be expected through better water management.

77. The International Action Programme on Water and Sustainable Agricultural Development is being used as the major instrument for assisting member nations to implement section F, chapter 18, of Agenda 21. The programme focuses on: (a) reviewing the national water sector in general, and the irrigation subsector in particular; (b) the identification of issues and opportunities for development in the context of policies/strategies; (c) river basin master planning; (d) the adaptation of technologies; (e) management issues; (f) environmental sustainability; (g) national capacity-building; and (h) the

formulation of national action programmes to address issues and realize opportunities. Assistance has been provided to formulate national and subregional action programmes in China, Egypt, Indonesia, Syria, the United Republic of Tanzania, Turkey, Zimbabwe and the Lake Chad basin. Assistance for initial implementation of the programme has been provided, through technical cooperation programmes, to four countries: Egypt, Indonesia, Turkey and Zimbabwe.

78. FAO, in collaboration with the International Programme for Technology Research in Irrigation and Drainage, has launched a programme on irrigation technology transfer in four East and Southern African countries: Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The objective of the programme is to promote sustainable low-cost irrigation technologies in those countries by enhancing the role of the private sector in the local manufacture of irrigation equipment, support services, and the marketing and testing/ demonstration of such locally manufactured equipment.

79. The representative of UNICEF informed the Subcommittee of the third Technical Consultation on Integrated Rural Water Management, on the theme "Building the bridge between water supply, sanitation and irrigation", to be held in July 1997. It was proposed that UNICEF act as host of the meeting. which will be jointly organized by UNICEF, FAO, WHO, UNDP, the World Bank and the Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat.

E. Activities of the Global Environment Facility in the area of water resources

(Agenda item 8)

80. The representatives of UNEP and the Stockholm Environment Institute described the International Waters Operational Strategy of the Global Environment Facility (GEF). As to addressing the large body of international waters issues, a comprehensive approach to water resources management is indicated, which must be cross-sectoral in scope, integrate ecological and development issues, and be based on holistic analyses of the carrying capacity of freshwater and marine environments. To that end, GEF can assist countries in improving the understanding of their water resources, identifying how different sectoral activities affect the aquatic environment, building institutional capacity for addressing transboundary water concerns and collaborating with neighbouring countries to improve the quality of shared water bodies.

81. The new GEF Operational Strategy of February 1996 identifies several priority areas within international waters, including the degradation of the quality of transboundary water resources; the physical habitat degradation of coastal and near shore marine areas, lakes and watercourses; the introduction of non-indigenous species; and the excessive exploitation of living and non-living marine resources. In addition, a set of international waters operational programmes has been developed under each focal area, focusing on water body based areas (transboundary freshwater basin components and large marine ecosystem components), integrated land and water multiple focal areas, and

contaminant-based areas (land-based activities demonstration component; global contaminants component; ship-related contaminants component).

82. The representative of UNEP also pointed out that the process for assessing project development facility proposals to GEF from the three implementing agencies (UNEP, UNDP, World Bank) has recently been changed. The inter-agency process has been discontinued in favour of direct bilateral discussions between each individual implementing agency and the GEF secretariat. He also pointed out that while the GEF Council is not identified as the funding agency for the Global Programme of Action for Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities, GEF would readily entertain proposals from implementing agencies for activities that directly support the implementation of the Global Programme of Action. The only condition is that proposals be consistent with the goals and conditions of the GEF Operational Strategy for International Waters.

F. Other issues related to system-wide coordination

(Agenda item 10)

1. Establishment of a computerized thesaurus of water terms

(Agenda item 10 (b))

83. The representative of UNESCO indicated that the UNESCO/WMO Glossary of Hydrological Terms is currently available in several languages on magnetic tape, and will soon be available through the UNESCO International Hydrological Programme Web site assuming that the relevant copyright issues are resolved. Similarly, the representative of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council stated that a glossary of terms has also been created and is available through the Council's Web site. Members of the Subcommittee agreed on the need to have knowledge of the existence of the various web sites of organizations with a view to cross-referencing them, as part of the work to be carried out on the development of a database on the relevant activities of the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system.

2. Science and technology and adaptation of technology issues in the field of water resources

(Agenda item 10 (c))

84. Pursuant to discussions at the sixteenth session of the Subcommittee, the representative of UNDP presented a paper entitled "Innovative approaches in the water sector". The paper had been prepared as a result of brainstorming sessions held by UNDP with representatives of the United Nations Secretariat and UNICEF. The Subcommittee did not have time to review the contents of the paper. It was agreed, however, that UNDP will distribute a copy to all the members of the Subcommittee for comments, and will submit a revised version to the next session of the Subcommittee.

3. Specific activities of member bodies brought to the attention of the members of the Subcommittee

(Agenda item 10 (d))

85. The representatives of the United Nations University informed the members of the Subcommittee that the United Nations University International Network on Water, Environment and Health (UNU/INWEH) was inaugurated on 20 September 1996.

86. The work of UNU/INWEH will be carried out by networks of cooperating units and project teams in Canada and other parts of the world, particularly the developing regions. Primary programme themes for UNU/INWEH will include aquatic ecosystem protection and management, water and wastewater treatment and remediation, environmental assessment, eco-toxicology, and water-related human health impacts. In its initial years, UNU/INWEH will focus on education and targeted training programmes that will address pressing global needs that cut across different disciplines.

87. UNU/INWEH will commence operations on 15 October 1996. Its headquarters will be located at McMasters University, Ontario, Canada, with supporting facilities at the Canada Centre for Inland Waters in Burlington. Dr. Ralph J. Daley has been appointed Director of UNU/INWEH.

88. The representatives of UNU/INWEH concluded that they look forward to close cooperative relationship with member organizations of the Subcommittee.

III. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

89. The seventeenth session of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources was held at UNESCO headquarters, Paris, from 9 to 11 October 1996, immediately following the sixth meeting of the Inter-Agency Steering Committee on Water Supply and Sanitation, held at UNESCO headquarters on 7 and 8 October 1996.

90. The session was opened by the Coordinator of UNESCO environmental programmes. He stressed the importance of coordination and cooperation among all the organizations of the United Nations, and the role of the Subcommittee as the vehicle for collaboration. The Coordinator also stressed the importance of adopting a holistic view and an integrated approach when working with water resources management, and of establishing a link with other areas of concern within Agenda 21, such as coastal zones and small island developing States. He further pointed out the significant role played by the Subcommittee as task manager for chapter 18 of Agenda 21, particularly for reporting to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its fifth session and the General Assembly at its special session on progress and issues concerning water resources.

91. Mr. András Szöllösi-Nagy, Director, UNESCO Division of Water Sciences, elected as Chairperson for 1996-1997, presided over the session. Mr. Frank Harvelt, Director, Water, Waste Management and Aquatic Environment, Sustainable Energy and Environment Division of UNDP, served as Vice-Chairperson.

Mr. Pierre Najlis of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat served as Secretary. The list of participants is contained in annex I, the agenda in annex II and the list of documents before the Subcommittee in annex III.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Chairman: András Szöllösi-Nagy (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)

Vice-Chairman: Mr. Frank Harvelt (Division for Science, Technology and the Private Sector, United Nations Development Programme)

Secretary: Pierre Najlis (Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat)

United Nations

Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development	Pierre Najlis Johan Kuylenstierna
Department for Development Support and Management Services	Claude Sauveplane
Economic Commission for Africa	Azm Hoque
United Nations Children's Fund	Michel Saint-Lot
United Nations Development Programme	Frank Harvelt
United Nations Environment Programme	Walter Rast
United Nations Centre for Human Settlements	Kalyan Ray
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	Daniel Mora-Castro
United Nations University	S. Chidambaranathan Ralph Daley
International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women	Borjana Schieber

Specialized agencies and related organizations

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Arumugam Kandiah
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	András Szöllösi-Nagy Janos Bogardi J. Alberto Tejada-Guibert
World Health Organization	Dennis Warner Gregor Watters

World Bank	Geoffrey Mattews
World Meteorological Organization	Dieter Kraemer
International Atomic Energy Agency	Klaus Froehlich
Observers	
Stockholm Environment Institute	Gunilla Björklund
World Water Council	Guy Lamoigne
IRC	Hans van Damme
Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council	Ranjith Wirasinha

Annex II

AGENDA

1. Opening of the session.

2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.

3. Matters arising from the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development: review of task managers report for 1997 review of chapter 18 of Agenda 21.

4. Matters arising from the third session of the Committee on Natural Resources.

5. Measures to strengthen coordination:

   (a) United Nations system;

   (b) Global Water Partnership;

   (c) Organizations outside the United Nations system.

6. Initiatives for joint action:

   (a) Comprehensive Assessment of the Freshwater Resources of the World;

   (b) Water resources management in African countries:

      (i) Water-related Components of Secretary-General's Special Initiative for Africa;

      (ii) Compilation and Analysis of Activities of United Nations organizations;

      (iii) Africa 2000 Initiative on Water Supply and Sanitation;

      (iv) Report on the Inter-Agency Group for Water in Africa;

   (c) Public information, with particular reference to World Water Day.

7. Coordination and monitoring of chapter 18 of Agenda 21, and system-wide cooperative efforts for the implementation of recommendations contained therein:

   (a) Integrated water resources development and management;

   (b) Water resources assessment;

   (c) Protection of water resources, water quality and aquatic ecosystems;

(d) Water supply and sanitation: report of the Inter-Agency Steering Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation;

(e) Water for sustainable urban development;

(f) Water for sustainable food production and rural development.

8. The Global Environment Facility and water resources.

9. Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities.

10. Other issues related to system-wide coordination:

(a) Facilitation of information flows concerning programmes and activities of the organizations of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations;

(b) Establishment of a computerized thesaurus of water terms;

(c) Science and technology and adaptation of technology issues in the field of water resources;

(d) Specific activities of member bodies brought to the attention of the members of the Subcommittee;

(e) Other matters.

11. Date and place of the eighteenth session of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources.

12. Adoption of the report of the seventeenth session of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources.

Annex III

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

ACC/SWR/1996/1	Provisional agenda
ACC/SWR/1996/2	Proposed programme of work
ACC/SWR/1996/3	Task managers report for the 1997 review of chapter 18 of Agenda 21: freshwater resources
ACC/SWR/1996/4	Matters arising from the eighth session of the Inter-Agency Steering Committee for Sustainable Development: report of the meeting of task managers
ACC/SWR/1996/5	Matters arising from the third session of the Committee on Natural Resources
ACC/SWR/1996/6	Comprehensive assessment of the freshwater resources of the world
ACC/SWR/1996/7	Water resources management in Africa: compilation and analysis of activities of the United Nations organizations
ACC/SWR/1996/7/Add.1	Water resources management in Africa: compilation and analysis of the activities of the United Nations Children's Fund in 1994, and planned activities for 1995
ACC/SWR/1996/8	Multi-agency programme for integrated water resources management in peri-urban areas
ACC/SWR/1996/9	Human resources development in the water sector
ACC/SWR/1996/10	Water resources management: overview of the activities of the Department for Development Support and Management Services and comments on the progress on the implementation of Agenda 21
ACC/SWR/1996/11	Innovative approaches in the water sector

Annex IV

PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE EIGHTEENTH SESSION OF THE ACC SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER RESOURCES

1. Opening of the session.

2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.

3. Matters arising from the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development.

4. Measures to strengthen coordination:

   (a) United Nations system;

   (b) Global Water Partnership;

   (c) Organizations outside the United Nations system;

   (d) Facilitation of information flows concerning programmes and activities of the organizations of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations.

5. Initiatives for joint action:

   (a) Comprehensive assessment of the freshwater resources of the world: follow-up;

   (b) Water resources management in Africa;

   (c) Public information, with particular reference to World Water Day.

6. Coordination and monitoring of chapter 18 of Agenda 21, and system-wide cooperative efforts for the implementation of recommendations contained therein:

   (a) Integrated water resources development and management;

   (b) Water resources management;

   (c) Protection of water resources, water quality and aquatic ecosystems;

   (d) Water supply and sanitation: report of the Inter-Agency Steering Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation;

   (e) Water for sustainable urban development;

   (f) Water for sustainable food production and rural development;

   (g) Impact of climate change on water resources.

7. The Global Environment Facility and water resources

8. Other issues related to system-wide coordination:

   (a) Water-related natural disasters;

   (b) Water for industrial uses;

   (c) Establishment of a computerized thesaurus of water terms;

   (d) Science and technology and adaptation of technology issues;

   (e) Specific activities of member bodies brought to the attention of the Subcommittee;

   (f) Other matters.

9. Date and place of the nineteenth session of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources, and selection of Chair and vice-chairpersons for the nineteenth and twentieth sessions of the Subcommittee.

10. Adoption of the report of the ACC Subcommittee on Water at its eighteenth session.